AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Before examination of this application, please substitute the following claims for the version of the claims originally submitted:

Claims 1.-11. (Canceled)

Claim 12. (Original) A method of operating a nuclear power plant through a fuel cycle of a core of a reactor of the plant, the method comprising:

determining a maximum power level for the reactor;

obtaining a license to operate the reactor at the maximum power level;

operating the reactor at an initial power level less than the maximum power level during a first part of the fuel cycle; and

operating the reactor at an enhanced power level during a second part of the cycle, the enhanced power level being between the initial power level and the maximum power level;

the increase in power level from the initial level to the enhanced power level being based at least in part upon the progressive depletion of the core during the fuel cycle.

Claim 13. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 12, wherein the step of operating the reactor at an enhanced power level during a second part of the cycle comprises operating the reactor at a substantially continuously variable enhanced power level.

Claim 14. (New) The method as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the step of operating the reactor at a substantially continuously variable enhanced power level comprises maintaining the highest enhanced power level possible at substantially each point in the fuel cycle.

PAGE 5/6 * RCVD AT 8/27/2004 2:36:01 PM [Eastern Daylight Time] * SVR:USPTO-EFXRF-1/4 * DNIS:8729306 * CSID:412 374 3832 * DURATION (mm-ss):01-28